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Recommended Citation

Mantz, Erika, "New Englands Migration History Focus Of Conference Sept 23 24" (2005). *UNH Today*. 1454.
<https://scholars.unh.edu/news/1454>

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New England's Migration History Focus Of Conference Sept. 23-24

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Sept. 6, 2005

DURHAM, N.H. -- New England's immigration history and its connection to current events is the topic of a free conference cosponsored by the Center for the Study of Community at Portsmouth's Strawberry Banke Museum and Center for New England Culture at the University of New Hampshire Sept. 23-24, 2005.

"Becoming American/Maintaining Identity: A Community Conference on Immigration and Language in New England" builds on the success of last year's conference, which illuminated a general understanding of immigration in the region. This year's conference will focus on issues related to language. The conference will be at Strawberry Banke Museum Friday, Sept. 23, and at the Community Campus in Portsmouth on Saturday.

The keynote speaker is Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and UNH professor of English Charles Simic. He will give a talk entitled "Language, Identity and Immigration," based on his memoir *A Fly in the Soup* Friday, Sept. 23, at 7:30 p.m. at St. John's Church in Portsmouth.

Activities on Friday include an immigration history tour of Strawberry Banke Museum, a memoir writing workshop, and the chance to record oral history interviews. Saturday will feature public lectures on the history of immigration in Maine and New Hampshire, a panel discussion about English as a Second Language in New Hampshire schools, and short "crash courses" in various languages.

"The Center for New England Culture is pleased to continue its partnership with the Center for the Study of Community at Strawberry Banke Museum," said David Watters, director of the Center for New England Culture. "The two centers have worked together over the past year with English as a Second Language teachers in area high schools and with local students from Indonesia, China, and other nations on an oral history project to document their experiences. The work of these students will be featured at the conference, making it truly a community project, and the keynote presentation by Charles Simic will bring the insights of one of America's preeminent writers to the theme of language and immigration."

The conference is free and open to the public, but registration is required at www.studyofcommunity.org, by calling 603-422-7543, or e-mailing csc@strawberrybanke.org.